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FM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS FR  
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UNCLAS UNESCO PARIS FR 001590

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
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SUBJECT: 183RD UNESCO EXECUTIVE BOARD: DG'S SPEECH

¶1. (U) Summary: UNESCO's one-day Executive Board, held November 23, served as the "clean-up" meeting following the biennial General Conference held last month, and provided the opportunity for newly installed Director-General, Irina Bokova, to address Board members and set some direction for the months ahead. Bokova was widely expected to announce a major restructuring of the Secretariat but decided in the end not to do so, raising concerns about a slow start to getting her own team in place. End summary.

¶2. (U) Having just taken office on November 15, UNESCO's newly installed Director-General, Irina Bokova, made her first appearance before the Executive Board, and provided members with an overview of her plans for the Organization under her new administration.

¶3. (U) This Executive Board session was primarily devoted to the nuts and bolts of electing a new Chairman, Vice-Chairmen, and reinstating the Committees and Commissions of the Executive Board for the 2009-2011 term (septel).

#### RESTRUCTURING THE SECRETARIAT

¶4. (SBU) The other element of business that appeared vital, but strangely dropped off the agenda at the last minute, was restructuring the Secretariat to reduce the number of Assistant Directors-General (ADG's) and generate the savings needed to appoint two Deputy Directors-General. Although most Member States agreed that there are too many ADG's and that Bokova should have the right to restructure the Secretariat, Bokova's staff put a foot wrong at the end of last week when apparently without her authorization they sounded out certain delegations about the possibility of abolishing the post of ADG for Communications and Information (CI) and folding that sector into the Social and Human Sciences Sector. CI's supporters led by Denmark protested so strongly to Bokova on Friday, November 20, that she decided to put the whole idea of restructuring on hold until the regular spring Executive Board.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Bokova now faces a serious problem in taking control of the Organization and starting her new administration. She must follow UNESCO's slow hiring procedures to fill the Organization's top level positions but she has not gotten buy-in from the member states on what those top positions should even be. This virtually guarantees that her administration will get off to a slow start. Bokova will be obliged to extend the contracts of the ADG's now in place, or find other solutions until her own team is recruited and put into place. It is possible that Bokova will be without key personnel until late spring or early summer 2010. (Note: Former D-G Matsuura launched several task forces prior to taking office to help him review the structure of the Secretariat. Bokova has, apparently, decided not to use the same approach. End note). End Comment.

#### Program Issues

¶6. (U) On program topics, Bokova's speech to the Executive Board echoed the main themes of her major inaugural speech of October 23rd before the General Conference. She said that her work principle is to maintain a constant dialogue, and that she will be calling on each and every colleague and delegate to help her advance UNESCO's work over the next few years. Bokova stressed that our success as

an organization will be dependent on our ability to provide delivery of quality programs efficiently and effectively in the many nations that need UNESCO's help. She said that UNESCO's strategic orientation and positioning will be among her top concerns.

#### Priority Africa and Gender Equality

¶17. (U) Bokova said that Africa will remain a top priority for her administration and that she will be establishing links with the African Union and leaders from across the continent. On the subject of gender equality, Bokova said that the empowerment of women will be a key element, not only in UNESCO's programs, but in the Secretariat as well. She said that both of these issues would be integrated into every UNESCO program, to ensure that we keep moving in the right direction.

#### Holistic UNESCO

¶18. (U) Bokova also promised to create a High Panel for Peace and Dialogue, bringing together intellectuals, noted personalities, and others to help define new paths for UNESCO in its work for tolerance, reconciliation, and pluralism. She added that her goal is to make "globalization more humane". She said that her vision of UNESCO is a "holistic" one, and that in all of our work, we must show solidarity with the most vulnerable of the world.

#### Education

¶19. (U) Director-General Bokova noted that education remains, of course, UNESCO's overriding priority, and mentioned that she will work to raise the visibility of UNESCO's work in this field in the coming months both during the COFINTEA conference and in New York with Secretary-General Ban in January. She also said that she will be in contact with the World Bank, the FTI (Fast Track Initiative), the IMF, and OECD to find more money for education. She stressed that she will campaign to hold member states to pledges made during the G-8 and G-20 summits on this point. Bokova also said that UNESCO must find ways to integrate our work into the One UN model in order to be effective.

#### Visibility

¶10. (U) On the subject of visibility, Bokova said that she would be doing more to bring media attention to UNESCO and, more specifically, to bring UNESCO's work to the attention of the public at large. She said that partnerships with foundations, institutions, business, and private individuals would be explored to find alternative financing to bring more extra budgetary money to UNESCO to help fund its programs. Bokova said that her goal is to make UNESCO more vocal and more visible on the world stage.

#### Climate Change

¶11. (U) As a strong advocate for Climate Change, Bokova said that she will attend the upcoming summit in Copenhagen, and will be working to maximize bilateral contacts while in Denmark. She also noted that biodiversity will be a key subject for her, and that she also plans to develop another High Level Panel for Science during her administration.

#### Culture

¶12. (U) Regarding Culture, Bokova noted that UNESCO is not up to speed on the "progressive digitalization of culture", and wants to organize a conference on this subject in the future.

#### Management

¶13. (U) Returning to the Secretariat, Bokova stressed that decentralization and rotation of Secretariat staff is something that she believes will enrich UNESCO. She also said that she will work to push RBM (Results Based management) policies at UNESCO to refine and strengthen the work undertaken by former D-G Matsuura.

¶14. (SBU) Comment: Bokova's first interaction with the new Executive Board was seen by some delegates (including Japan), as a little "stormy", and by others as disappointing, giving too few

specifics and resorting to too many generalities regarding her vision for UNESCO. Working closely with the new Board Chairman, Russia's Eleonora Mitrofanova, it appears likely that the two will attempt to move the Board away from micromanagement of the Secretariat, and try to free Bokova's hands on how best to redesign the Secretariat to tackle the work ahead.

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